

VALID

presents

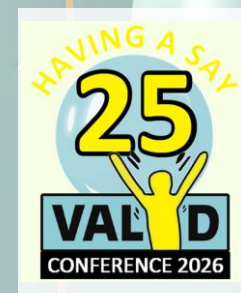
Having a Say Conference 2026

Program Summary

as of 9th Jan. 2026

27th – 29th January 2026

Deakin University, Waterfront Campus
1 Gheringhap Street, Geelong



Platinum Sponsors



Theme: '25 years: Strengthening our Voices for a better Future!'

Having a Say (HaS) conference is celebrating 25 years of in-person conference that have promoted self-advocacy skills to strengthen the voices of people with disability.

That is thousands of people with disability who have:

- presented or performed at HaS
- had their voices heard and told their stories
- found inspiration from their peers
- gained information to help them with problems
- had their achievements celebrated
- learned about their rights









This is a time when everyone's voice matters. HaS will keep equipping people to speak up and promoting the talents, achievements and voices of people with disability.

More Information available:







www.valid.org.au

T: 03 9416 4003 E: havingasay@valid.org.au

Tuesday 27th January 2026

Open at 9.30am	Foyer Grab your Registration Package, get a Coffee & start planning your day!						
10.30am – 12noon	<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; align-items: center;"> <div style="text-align: center;">  Victorian Disability Worker Commission </div> <div style="text-align: center;"> <p>Welcome to Country Official Opening, Mel Martinelli, Executive Director, Equity & Inclusion, Deakin University</p> <p>Welcome to Geelong by Stretch Kontelj, Mayor of the City of Greater Geelong TBC</p> <p>Keynote: Kate Maddern, Acting Victorian Disability Worker Commissioner (VDWC)</p> <p>Performance by 2025 Having a Say's Got Talent winner – Adam James</p> <p>Special Presentation for 25th HaS conference</p> <p>Open Microphone</p> </div> <div style="text-align: right;">  </div> </div> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; align-items: center; margin-top: 10px;"> Costa Hall (Auditorium)  </div>						
12noon - 1.30pm	<div style="display: flex; align-items: center;">  <p>Have lunch with friends at 'The Common' Café or in the Courtyard and check out the Our Choice Expo</p> </div>						
1.30pm - 2.30pm	Performance The Wizard of Scope (Scope Ballarat) Costa Hall	Workshop My Health Matters Masterclass (Council for Intellectual Disability) Yellow Room	Presentation Promoting a safe and high-quality disability sector – with the Victorian Disability Worker Commission (VDWC) and the Disability Services Commissioner (DSC) Blue Room	VALID Stream VALID Connect – Get Connected Green Room 	Presentation Supporting My Rights (Down Syndrome Australia) 3 Different Self-Advocacy Journeys (New Wave Bass Coast South Gippsland) Grey Room	Come & Try  Gentle Tango Hair & Make-Up Self-Advocacy Bingo Tie-dyeing <i>Meet in Courtyard</i> Harley Rides <i>Meet out front</i> ONLINE ONLY Trivia Quiz	Presentation Changing the Disability Discrimination Act (Inclusion Australia) What the Disability Dialogue Is and How You Can Get Involved (Disability Dialogue) Pink Room 
2.30 - 3.00pm	Foyer <div style="display: flex; align-items: center; justify-content: center;">  <p>Afternoon Tea break</p> </div>						

Tuesday 27th January 2026

3.00pm - 4.00pm	<p>Open Microphone</p> <p>'On the Couch with Heather & Will'</p> <p>Including your stories of 25 years of HaS</p>  <p>Costa Hall</p>	<p>Workshop</p> <p>Let's Get Loud</p> <p>(Down Syndrome Australia & National Centre of Excellence in Intellectual Disability Health)</p> <p>Yellow Room</p>	<p>Workshop</p> <p>Changes to Disability Employment Services: What it means for people with intellectual disability (Inclusion Australia)</p> <p>Moving Forward from Institutions in NSW (Hunter Circles)</p> <p>Blue Room</p>	<p>VALID Stream</p> <p>International Self advocacy online get-together, including self-advocates online from Singapore (VALID)</p>  <p>Green Room</p>	<p>Presentation</p> <p>Accessing VLA to strengthen your voice (Victoria Legal Aid - VLA)</p> <p>ABI and the Criminal Justice System: Lived-Experience Training Made for Us, With Us (Voices for Change)</p> <p>Grey Room</p>	<p>Come & Try </p> <p>Art - Painting Badge-making Dream Catchers Hair & Make-up Craft with Wood</p> <p>Meet in Courtyard</p> <p>Harley Rides Meet out front</p> <p>ONLINE ONLY Yoga</p>	<p>Presentation</p> <p>Understanding what's the difference between SIL and SDA? (Scope)</p> <p>Tenant Voice - Putting the voice of people with disabilities first in SDA Housing (Young People In Nursing Homes)</p> <p>Pink Room </p>
6.30 - 10.00pm	<p>Disco Event</p> <p><i>Let's Party & Sparkle</i> – celebrating 25-year silver anniversary of HaS, to the music of 'Unlimited'</p> <p><i>Croatian Community Centre</i></p> 				<p>Speakers</p> <p>Guest speakers: 25 Years of HaS in the words of those who have been part of it.</p> 		

Thanks to our SILVER Sponsors:



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Thanks to our BRONZE Sponsors:

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and Advocacy Centre












Note: ONLINE Sessions

All sessions that have the Zoom symbol will be available ONLINE via a Zoom link
- which will be sent to people who have registered the week before.












Wednesday 28th January 2026

Open at 8.30am	Grab your Registration Package if it's your first dayget a Coffee & start planning your day!								
	Foyer								
9.30am - 10.30am	 NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission	Special Keynote: Colleen Pearce, former Victorian Public Advocate Sir Robert Martin Self-Advocacy Award Keynote: Louise Glanville, Commissioner and Natalie Wade, Associate Commissioner NDIS Quality & Safety Commission							
	Costa Hall								
10.30am - 11 am	Foyer								
	 Morning Tea								
11.00am - 12.00pm	Performance	Workshop	Workshop	VALID Stream	Presentation	Come & Try 	Presentation		
	The Sugar Bells Live (Scope Ballarat)	Introduction to friendship, relationships and intimacy workshop (Melba Support Services)	Improve your public speaking skills! (Down Syndrome Victoria) How inclusive governance can build a better future for everyone (Our Voice)	Driving Change (VALID Self Advocacy team)	Easy English Family Violence Safety Planning (Safe Steps)	Badge Making Colouring for Adults Karaoke Speed Friendship <i>Meet in Courtyard</i>	People first: improving co-design of health professional education (Office of the Public Advocate)		
	Costa Hall	Yellow Room	Blue Room	Green Room 	Grey Room	Harley Rides <i>Meet out front</i> ONLINE ONLY Music Trivia	genU Using our Voices to Support others – R U OK Day – at genU Pink Room 		
2.00pm - 1.30pm	Have lunch with friends or look at the Our Choice Expo or join in the fun in the Courtyard								
									
12.15pm	Courtyard								
	Live entertainment by Genu Connections TV. Have your lunch and join in the fun!								















indicates ONLINE sessions for people who have registered for online

Wednesday 28th January 2026

1.30pm – 2.30pm	<p>Open Microphone</p> <p>'On the Couch with Will from VALID'</p>  <p>Costa Hall</p>	<p>Workshop</p> <p>Supporting family violence victim survivors (Safe Steps)</p> <p>You can be a researcher too – learn how! (Melbourne Uni)</p> <p>Yellow Room</p>	<p>Presentation</p> <p>Talking to your loved ones about friendships, relationships and intimacy (Melba Support Services)</p> <p>Blue Room</p>	<p>VALID Stream</p> <p>Empowering CALD Communities to overcome barriers to inclusion (VALID Community Development team)</p>  <p>Green Room</p>	<p>Presentation</p> <p>Food choice: why is it important and who helps? (Victoria University)</p> <p>Working Together: preventing everyday harm (Inclusion Group)</p> <p>Grey Room</p>	<p>Come & Try </p> <p>Art - painting Colouring with Adults Gentle Tango Craft -Wood & Mosaics Jewellery</p> <p>Meet in Courtyard</p> <hr/> <p>Harley Rides</p> <p>Meet out front</p> <hr/> <p>ONLINE ONLY</p> <p>Yoga</p>	<p>Presentation</p> <p>Stronger Together – Advocates Growing Self Advocates (Speak Out Tas.)</p> <p>Respecting Our Ability – inclusive governance project (Speak Out & SACID)</p>  <p>Pink Room</p>
2.30 - 3.00pm	<p style="text-align: center;"> Afternoon Tea break</p> <p><i>Foyer</i></p>						
3.00pm - 4.00pm	<p>Open Microphone</p> <p>25 Years of Having a Say conference – Memory Lane, videos & Open Microphone</p>  <p>Costa Hall</p>	<p>Workshop</p> <p>Life Changes: speaking up and managing change with your brother or sister (Siblings Australia)</p> <p>Yellow Room</p>	<p>Workshop</p> <p>You should have a say in your behaviour support (Melbourne Uni)</p> <p>Blue Room</p>	<p>VALID Stream</p> <p>Employment Advocacy Project (VALID Advocacy Team)</p> <p>VALID Q group and Rainbow Rights</p>  <p>Green Room</p>	<p>Presentation</p> <p>Life in Transition: Change, Choice and Confidence (Cerebral Palsy Support Network)</p> <p>Scambusters: Know it! Stop It! (Aust. Financial Complaints Authority)</p> <p>Grey Room</p>	<p>Come & Try </p> <p>Karaoke Photography workshop Speed Friendship Smoothie Bike</p> <p>Meet in Courtyard</p> <hr/> <p>Harley Rides</p> <p>Meet out front</p> <hr/> <p>ONLINE ONLY</p> <p>Self-Advocacy Bingo</p>	<p>Presentation</p> <p>Community for Everyone (Side by Side Advocacy & Hunter Circles)</p> <p>genU Client Leadership Teams – Big Voices, Big Ideas (genU)</p>  <p>Pink Room</p>
7pm - 10pm	<p style="text-align: center;">Having a Say's Got Talent (HGT) Auditions</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Contestants will sing, dance & entertain you as they audition (Note: finals on Thurs. 29th at 12.00pm)</p> <p style="text-align: center;">The HGT competition is sponsored by InLife Independent Living</p> <p>The Sphinx</p>						

Thursday 29th January 2026

8.45 – 9.30am	Grab your Registration Package if it's your first day.....get a coffee & start planning your day! <i>Foyer</i>						
9.30am – 10.15am	Open Microphone 25 Years of Having a Say conference – Memory Lane, videos & Open Microphone  Costa Hall	Workshop Making Self-Advocacy groups stronger (Inclusion Australia) Yellow Room	VALID Stream Confused about the changes to the NDIS – then we will talk about them in plain English and what you can do to self-advocate (VALID) Green Room 	Presentation The Great Accessible Road Trip (Great Ocean Road Tourism) My own house, and MY own business (Melinda Hewitt) Blue Room	Presentation Co-designing a research project: understanding obesity in people with intellectual disability (Deakin Uni) Grey Room	Come & Try Karaoke Colouring for Adults  ONLINE Self-Advocacy Bingo Meet in Courtyard	Presentation BIG Events for BIG futures! (genU) My Health Story – Leah Scott Pink Room 
10.15am	Morning Tea  <i>Foyer</i>						
10.45am – 11.30am	Performance 'Sing it out loud' (MusicSpace) Bird is the Word – puppet (Ellie Blackney) Costa Hall	Workshop 'Dreams & Aspirations' * come and write/tell/draw your dreams & goals for your life Yellow Room	VALID Stream Innovation in Inclusion (VALID Community Development Team) Green Room 	Presentation Supporting older people with intellectual disability living in SIL homes (Scope) My own place to live! Stephanie Challis Blue Room	Presentation My journey from school to work (Council for Intellectual Disability) Friends in the Workplace Grey Room	Come & Try Karaoke Craft -make a sign  ONLINE Yoga Meet in Courtyard	Presentation Building Inclusive Communities Through Conversation and Choice (MINDS Singapore) Pink Room 
11.30am	Brunch  <i>Foyer</i>						
12.00pm – 1.00pm	<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; align-items: center;">  <div style="text-align: center;"> CLOSING CEREMONY HaS's Got Talent Competition Final Family Empowerment Award 'Pentland - Banfield' Self Advocacy Award and the <u>Art Competition Prizes</u> sponsored by the Victorian Senior Practitioner </div>  </div> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; align-items: center; margin-top: 10px;"> <i>Costa Hall</i>  </div>						